



IN TOUCH

When Kids Rule

You may have heard in the news about the parents in Florida camping out on their front lawn, on strike and protesting their children's disrespect and lack of cooperation in an effort to force change. Some parents aren't laughing—they're watching to see if it actually works. A parent's attempt to develop a positive relationship with his or her child, monitor activities and whereabouts, and assist the teen in being independent, unfortunately, does not guarantee a smooth ride through adolescence. Most of the following behaviors, especially in combination, mean problems have reached crisis proportions. Does your teen exhibit any of them?

- 1) Threatening family members.
- 2) Verbal/physical abuse toward family members.
- 3) Staying out late without permission, gone for days, or running away.
- 4) Associating with other troubled teens.
- 5) Having secretive peers.
- 6) Intoxicated or high when he or she comes home.
- 7) Using the home as a "hotel."
- 8) Stealing from family members.
- 9) Trouble with the law or employer.

10) Isolation, avoidance of family activities, rage-like anger, and belligerence when he or she does not get his or her way.

11) Suicidal statements or attempts.

The EAP can assess your relationship with your teenager, and help you explore options. Don't think it's hopeless even if you have taken your child for professional counseling that didn't work because he or she would not cooperate. There are other steps to take.

All Knowing Customers

The Gallup Organization recently polled over 4,000 customer service employees who work for a major telecommunications company. They discovered several employees who scared off every single customer they spoke with in a given day. These customers did not return. The company might have made more money if these employees stayed home. You can be more valuable at work by listening and responding to customers so they feel really heard. Don't be "problem adverse." When a customer starts talking about a problem, don't react emotionally and interrupt to avoid hearing it. Instead, let the customer vent. Don't lecture or offend customers for bringing a problem to you that they have not thought through completely. Don't view customers as annoying, but competent and knowledgeable (even if they aren't). Here's why: Every customer's experience gives clues about how your organization can be more successful serving them.



Helping people lead healthier lives

Renewal

Everyone, no matter what kind of winter they've experienced, seems to welcome the signs of spring. Robins are starting to sing, the increase in daylight feels good, and the first wildflowers have been sighted on south-facing hills. People are beginning to get out into their yards and gardens.

The metaphors of the natural cycles and of gardening are useful and fertile ones. During the winter, when energy tends to be slower for a lot of people, it can seem like not much is happening. As with trees, however, there is often much going on below the surface. With spring, there often comes a sort of renewal and new growth. The cycles of nature are reproduced to some extent in our psyches and in our personal lives.

In the area of emotional health, spring can bring an increased sense of well-being and optimism—a new energy to our lives. If you have had what we call the “winter blues,” you should start to feel a shift in your emotional state. Even if you aren't bothered by winter weather, spring is usually felt to be renewing. So, in continuing the metaphor of gardening and natural cycles, let me offer four ideas for emotional wellness this spring. Bear in mind that it is much easier for me to offer these suggestions than it is to actually DO them.

- 1) Get rid of emotional debris. It is very easy to leave tricky emotional things untended over the winter—emotional junk piles. Spring is a good time to do some emotional “house cleaning.” Is there some emotional garbage you would be better off without? If you have been ruminating on something, going over and over it in your mind, this could be a great time to actually DO something to resolve it, or let it go. Could be that a few

visits with your friendly EAP counselor could help you do just that. It can add to your ability to enjoy your life as the days lengthen.

- 2) Add emotional nutrients to your soil. People, like plants, need care and feeding, sunlight and fresh air in order to thrive. Ask yourself: What is it that feeds you? Are you getting enough emotional, physical, and spiritual nurturance to be your healthiest? If not, what could you do to add some more?
- 3) Plant and cultivate “seeds of happiness.” Corny as it sounds, we *can* plant and nurture seeds of happiness in our lives. This means doing things and nurturing relationships that bring us joy. If you are at a loss for what that would mean in your life, this could be another area where EAP counseling could help you get moving in a positive direction.
- 4) Prune unwholesome parts. All of us have healthy, strong parts of ourselves, and parts that are unhealthy or in conflict with other parts. It's a really good time to take a good look at yourself, asking this question: What parts would you be better off without? This could mean anything from quitting smoking, to leaving behind a relationship that is unhealthy, to cutting out activities that no longer serve your best interests (Too much TV? Wasting time cleaning your 17-year-old's room for him?)

So think about taking some time to renew your emotional health this spring. For ideas, support or a nudge, contact your EAP counselor.

by Nancy Seldin, MPH, EdD

The Art of a Softer Confrontation

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) demonstrated in a study that brief confrontations of drug addicts who came to a doctor's office for routine follow-up medical appointments increased the likelihood of their eventually achieving abstinence. Peer counselors conducted the interviews. What was unique about these interventions? Analysis shows that the structure used in the interviews reduced defensiveness and increased rapport. The approach improved the addict's willingness to examine drug use more honestly, see symptoms of addictive disease in their experience, and accept help. The confrontation model included:

- 1) Asking permission to discuss drug use.
- 2) Participating in a discussion with the addict about the use of drugs and how it was getting in the way of what the patient wanted for his or her life.
- 3) Discussing the addict's readiness to change and encouraging him or her to accept help.
- 4) Attempting to motivate the patient to accept a better plan to achieve abstinence.

Family and close friends play key roles in motivating alcoholics and drug addicts to accept help. However, they are often unsuccessful when an unstructured provocative approach is used that increases defensiveness. This study demonstrates a non-provocative approach with a structure that could eventually motivate an alcoholic/addict to get help or accept treatment.

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Recapture Your Motivation

It's natural to experience short periods of decreased motivation, even if you love your job. It's nothing to get worried about. The human body was not designed to stay in a continual state of "ready-go" or "up." A few emotional maneuvers can help you recapture your sense of excitement.

Shift gears: On down days, try shifting your focus to other work activities you have been postponing. Something as different as filing stacks of papers or even straightening your office can give you a sense of renewal.

Change scenery: Take your work to a different location or environment, if possible. Or, walk around the block near your place of work.

Leap-over: When the workload is heavy and appears to drag on, you may imagine nothing different will ever come along. Try thinking about the next big goal in your career or personal life to give you more juice.

Smoking Quit Line Launched

Former Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson announced a series of initiatives designed to help Americans quit smoking. The initiatives include the opening of a national Quit Line number (1.800.QUITNOW) that puts users in touch with programs that can help them give up tobacco. In addition, a new HHS web site (www.smokefree.gov) offers live online advice during specific hours and tons of information to make cessation easier. HHS is now the first federal agency to be smoke-free (no smoking anywhere on HHS properties).



Using Your EAP

Question: If a supervisor calls the EAP for advice on supervising an employee who is having performance problems, will the EAP professional disclose to the supervisor whether the employee has been to the EAP?

Answer: Without a signed release of information, the EAP professional will not disclose an employee's participation in the EAP. If a supervisor inquires about whether an employee has come to the EAP, the EAP professional will remind the supervisor that information cannot be disclosed without a signed release.

Question: My insurance plan only permits me to use mental health professionals from its approved list. How can the EAP help me if I already have names given to me by the managed care company?

Answer: Most insurance (or managed care organizations) provide names of mental health professionals from their database by zip code and specialty, but may not provide information about philosophy, practice background, subspecialties, therapy styles, or other information that you may

consider important and helpful in deciding upon a therapist. Employee assistance professionals may have much of this information because they are active in the local community. The EAP can potentially help you decide upon one of the therapists who will best meet your needs.

Question: Do EAPs give reports to employers about how well the program is used or appreciated by employees? If so, is the confidentiality of clients maintained?

Answer: Yes. All EAPs must demonstrate value to the host organization. Measuring impact and gauging worth is a key element of EAP activity. However, this reporting never includes the names of employees who are clients, only general information such as the number of employees seen during a given period. It does not include confidential information.

To speak with an EAP professional,
please call:

800.765.0770